DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 365 602 SO 023 577

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TITLE ECO/Social Studies and Community-Centered Learning: The 21st Century Social Studies Curriculum.
INSTITUTION Global Horizons, The Center for Applied Ecosocial Studies, Corpus Christi, TX.
PUB DATE Sep 91
NOTE 26p.
AVAILABLE FROM Global Horizons, 6829 Roseland Dr., Corpus Christi, TX 78414.
PUB TYPE Guides - Classroom Use - Teaching Guides (For Teacher) (052)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Community Resources; *Community Schools; Curriculum; *Ecology; Elementary Secondary Education; *Experiential Learning; *Global Approach; Instructional Materials; Learning Activities; *Social Studies; Teaching Methods
IDENTIFIERS Active Learning; *Global Education

ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the importance of using community resources to supplement classroom instruction in the social studies to enhance the students' comprehension of the importance and immediate application of classroom instruction to the real world. Community resources can be used by classroom teachers in all subject areas, and at all grade levels to: (1) enhance knowledge about the nature and character of the local community, (2) make that which is learned through the schooling process relevant to the daily lives of students, (3) provide opportunities for knowledge and skills development, (4) provide opportunities for knowledge and skills application in real world settings, (5) make learning come alive, interesting, and relevant, as a result of direct exposure and interaction with phenomena, and (6) help students to make connections between that which happens in the classroom and the real world in which they live. In the 21st century, as the day to day lives of people in all nations are influenced by increase cross-cultural links, people will be required to understand and interact with people, cultures, languages, lifestyles, and value systems unlike their own. Students must comprehend the enormity and complexity of the global community. The document discusses when such resources should be used, how they can be used, and how to develop units of study. Areas covered include visual instruction, role playing, artifacts, frame of reference, world of work, and the concept of interlocking communities. The motto of the community centered schools concept is "Don't replicate, incorporate." (DK)

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ECO/SOCIAL STUDIES
and
COMMUNITY-CENTERED LEARNING

The 21st Century Social Studies Curriculum

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Richard O. Peters, Ed.D.

September 1991

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HUMANS & ENVIRONMENT
LEARNING PROGRAM
(HELP)

Founded in 1981, GLOBAL HORIZONS is an educational collaborative for the design, delivery, and evaluation of K-12 instructional programs as well as critical thinking/decision making skills development modeling in global education, and international environmental education.

Clearinghouse activities include:

publication of a periodic newsletter, GlobeScope;

dissemination of relevant literature in the field;

original works published by the ERIC system and in national periodicals;

national conference paper presentations;

teacher inservice education 'how to do it' and informational workshops;

development of audiovisual and print instructional materials for classroom use and field-based studies;

the Humans/Environment Learning Program for continuous, integrated, and sequential instruction;

field testing OUR COMMON HOME: EARTH instructional units in K-12 classrooms;

application of the Proactive Action Model Cross-Culture Matrix to the study of diverse social groups.

NGO member of the Environment Liaison Centre, Nairobi KENYA

THE CENTER FOR APPLIED ECO/SOCIAL STUDIES

The ECO/SOCIAL Studies approach focuses attention not only on the diverse character of natural and social (human-made) environments, worldwide, but also on the day-to-day interaction and interdependence between these types of environments.

STUDENT ENVIRONMENT AWARENESS (SEA) introduces students to the nature and character of lifespace environments that are nearby/close-at-hand. These environments are experienced, directly, through the senses and are perceived to be concrete and relevant to daily life. Environmental phenomena include people, places, things, locations and sites, natural processes, inventions, institutions, and artifacts. An emphasis is placed on field-based studies/learning involving nature walks, field trips, and anthropological digs.

MAN AND HIS ENVIRONMENT (ME) program activities enable students to interact with the total lifespace environment not only in the classroom and at selected/related field-based sites but also through hiking daytrips, canoe trips, and overnight camping excursions. An emphasis is placed on active student participation in awareness/exposure activities that challenge abilities and enhance positive SELF concepts and esteem.

PEOPLE IN THEIR ENVIRONMENTS (PIE) involves students in the study of selected human groups -- past and present, worldwide, and focuses attention on the character/nature and interaction between natural/social environments. Students work in small inquiry teams and role play researching social scientists.

HUMANS/ENVIRONMENT LEARNING PROGRAM (H/ELP) provides students the opportunity to investigate conflicts, issues, problems, and/or situations that interest them. The total lifespace environment of the community, area/region, state, nation, and global village becomes a learning laboratory as phenomena is studied. Students are encouraged to be proactive; that is, to inquire, to discover, to ponder, to make decisions, and to act in constructive ways so as to resolve conflicts, to clarify issues, to solve problems, and/or to better understand situations.

A Decade of Lifespace Awareness: 1981 - 1991

The motto of community-centered schools:

DON'T REPLICATE -- INCORPORATE!

Because children and youth come from diverse, real world environments, there is a need to relate classroom and field-based instruction to everyday life!

Schools cannot, and should not attempt to, replicate within their walls the total real world environment of the community. People, places, things, events, and locations/sites can be made an integral part of teaching and learning processes. People living in the community can become field-based teachers, and natural/social locations and sites can be used as field-based classrooms; wherein artifacts, relics, and other phenomena are used as instructional materials. DON'T REPLICATE -- INCORPORATE!

At times, resources can be brought into the classroom, and on other occasions students must be taken into the community, e.g., walks through nature areas, field trips to museums, attendance at plays and other types of live performances, excursions to work-places to learn more about the world of work, visits to historic locations/places, and involvement in community service projects.

Everything in the community environment that surrounds our children has both immediate and long-range effects upon their lives.

Community resources can be used, by classroom teachers in all subject matter areas of the typical K-12 curriculum, to:

1) enhance knowledge about the nature and character of the local community;

2) make that which is learned through the schooling process relevant to the daily lives of students;

3) provide opportunities for knowledge and skills development;

4) provide opportunities for knowledge and skills application in real world settings;

5) make learning COME ALIVE, interesting, and relevant -- as a result of direct exposure and interaction with phenomena;

6) help students to make the CONNECTIONS between that which happens in the classroom/at school and the real world in which they live.

There is a need to enhance student's comprehension of the importance, as well as the immediate application, of classroom instruction to the real world -- for today and for all of their tomorrows.

THE EVER-EXPANDING CONCEPT OF COMMUNITY

In 1981, the International Activities Committee of the National Council for the Social Studies declared that technological advances, increased trade, tourism and cultural exchanges, environmental concerns, competition for markets and scarce resources will draw nations and peoples into increasingly complex relationships in the decades ahead. The IAC envisioned a 21st Century characterized by increased interaction among societies in a global culture that will exist along side an array of destinctive local, national, and regional cultures.

The day-to-day lives of people in all nations will be influenced by increased cross-cultural links. Individuals will be required to understand and interact with people, cultures, languages, lifestyles,

and value systems unlike their own.

The phenomenon of globalization will become more-evident with increased global consciousness, and an awareness of our identities as members of the human species.

Because we do live in a global age, and because we do exist simultaneously within the context of several interrelated real life world environments, today's students must comprehend the enormity and complexity of the global community -- if they are to function effectively as 21st Century citizens.

WHEN RESOURCES?

Whenever community resources are incorporated into the instructional process, there are several questions that must be asked and answered by classroom teachers. For example:

> WHEN IS THE BEST TIME TO USE COMMUNITY RESOURCES in order to maximize their impact upon student's learning? At the beginning, during, or at the end of unit instruction?
>
> IS THERE ANYTHING THAT CAN BE DONE OR USED to accomplish instructional goals and objectives other than the use of community resources?
>
> WHEN ARE FIELD TRIPS AND OTHER TYPES OF EXCURSIONS INTO THE COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENT ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY in order to enhance student's comprehension about the real world?

Resources can be used 1) to introduce a unit of study -- to focus student's attention on planned activities and related experiences, 2) to develop the concepts, knowledge, and skills related to the unit theme or topic during the formative stage, or 3) as an end-of-unit culminating activity -- providing students with opportunities to apply acquired concepts, knowledge, and

skills to field-based activities.

Introductory Phase of Unit Development (Example). Guest speakers in the classroom, pictures of local sites, audiovisual presentations of far-removed natural/social environment phenomena, or field trips into the community may best focus student's attention on specified areas of study. The incorporation of resources, e.g., people, places, things, events, and locations/sites, into the instructional process lends a sense of reality to planned activities, and students develop an awareness of the relevance of formal learning to the real world(s) that they know.

As part of the unit on seashore environments, Mrs. Caldwell has identified three (3) community resource people and invited them to visit the classroom. Complete with audiovisual materials and natural artifacts (e.g., clams, crabs, sand dollars, and snails as well as beach sand and moss-covered rocks) the guest speakers discuss and exhibit the nature and character of seashore environments. The audiovisual presentations (e.g., films, filmstrips, slides, still photographs, and/or video tapes) can be used to introduce students (vicariously) to environments and settings that are distant/far-removed from where they are located.

Formative Phase of Unit Development (Example). As students become directly involved in unit-related activities, there may be appropriate times to directly expose them to selected resources that will:

1) enhance their comprehension;

2) introduce them to new and previously unknown data or phenomena;

3) build upon and enrich acquired concepts, knowledge, and skills;

4) expose them to new aspects of the total lifespace environment that is the local/ area community;

5) bring students into direct contact with resources that have had/do now have great influence upon their singular and collective lives.

Mrs. Caldwell has identified a field-based seashore site that will be used as a learning laboratory by her sixth grade class. Students are taken on a walk-through of the site -- enabling community resource people to formally introduce students to the nature and character of the area. Students collect a few artifacts for later study back at school.

Culminating Phase of Unit Development (Example). It may be best to study a theme or topic thoroughly before introducing students to related phenomena. Using resources in this phase of unit development enables students to bring acquired concepts, knowledge, and skills to planned field-based activities. Mrs. Caldwell takes her sixth grade class on a daytrip to the seashore. While there, students 1) locate, identify and study life forms, 2) collect artifacts for the classroom seashore environment tank, 3) search for types of marine debris that can endanger birds and sea life (e.g., plastic six-pack rings, fishing line, and netting), and 4) record data in journals and on video tape. The students generally conduct themselves as researching scientists.

VISUAL INSTRUCTION

Because some students learn better when they SEE things that are otherwise discussed in the classroom, and because pictures and motion -- combined with natural color and sounds -- can focus attention on desired activities, the K-12 curriculum should provide for a variety of visual instruction opportunities.

Films, filmstrips, slides, still photographs, and/or video tapes can replicate the nature and character of real world environments and phenomena that are often times OFF-LIMITS to students because they are distant/far-removed, dangerous to the health and well-being of students, or not suited for large group touring and instruction. It may be that only by seeing locations/sites on film or tape that students will ever gain exposure to selected phenomena.

ROLE PLAYING

In the 21st Century, domestic and international conflicts, issues, and problems will demand that citizens think critically and objectively, make rational decisions, and act responsibly when confronting, analyzing, and solving matters of local/area/regional/state-wide/sectional/national/international concern and magnitude. Individuals will be required to understand and interact with people, cultures, languages, lifestyles, and value systems unlike their own.

Acting like researching social scientists, students can:

1) perceive conflicts, issues, problems, and/or situations;

2) seek data from diverse sources that pertains to perceived conflicts, issues, problems, and/or situations;

3) collect, evaluate, and organize data for further analysis;

4) synthesize relevant data that has been obtained from a variety of primary/secondary sources into a meaningful whole -- for the purpose of refining perceptions;

5) brainstorm possible alternatives as to conflict resolution, issues clarification, problem solving, and/or situation comprehension;

6) select the most-appropriate alternative regarding the perceived conflict(s), issue(s), problem(s), and/or situation(s);

7) design a strategy to implement the chosen course-of-action;

8) apply the designed strategy to the identified conflict, issue, problem, and/or situation;

9) monitor the implementation and operation of the strategy process;

10) collect and analyze newly generated strategy data;

11) apply newly generated data to the resolution of the perceived conflict, issue, problem, and/or situation;

12) apply newly generated data to on-going processes of critical thinking and decision making -- as well as proactive action.

K-12 SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM SCHEMA

As students progress through a curriculum schema that is CONTINUOUS (K-12), INTEGRATED (multidiscipline), and SEQUENTIAL (ordered step-by-step/grade-by-grade), students investigate the natural (ECOlogical) and human-made (SOCIAL) aspects of diverse

global settings.

IN WHAT WAY(S) HAVE HUMAN GROUPS ADJUSTED TO THEIR PHYSICAL SURROUNDINGS?

WHAT ARE THE ORIGINS OF DIVERSE VALUE SYSTEMS AMONG HUMAN GROUPS?

WHAT ARE THE BASIC NEEDS OF ALL HUMANS -- SINGULARLY AND COLLECTIVELY?

TO WHAT DEGREE HAVE HUMAN GROUPS INFLUENCED NATURE -- PAST AND PRESENT?

WHAT IS STEWARDSHIP?

IN WHAT WAY(S) ARE NATURAL AND SOCIAL ENVIRONMENTS INTERDEPENDENT?

WHAT RESPONSIBILITIES DO HUMAN GROUPS HAVE -- IN ORDER TO PROTECT THE GLOBAL LIFESPACE?

As students mature, and move through the several grades, they develop a sense of SELF in relationship to the several worlds in which they exist and function -- locally/regionally/state-wide/sectionally/nationally/internationally.

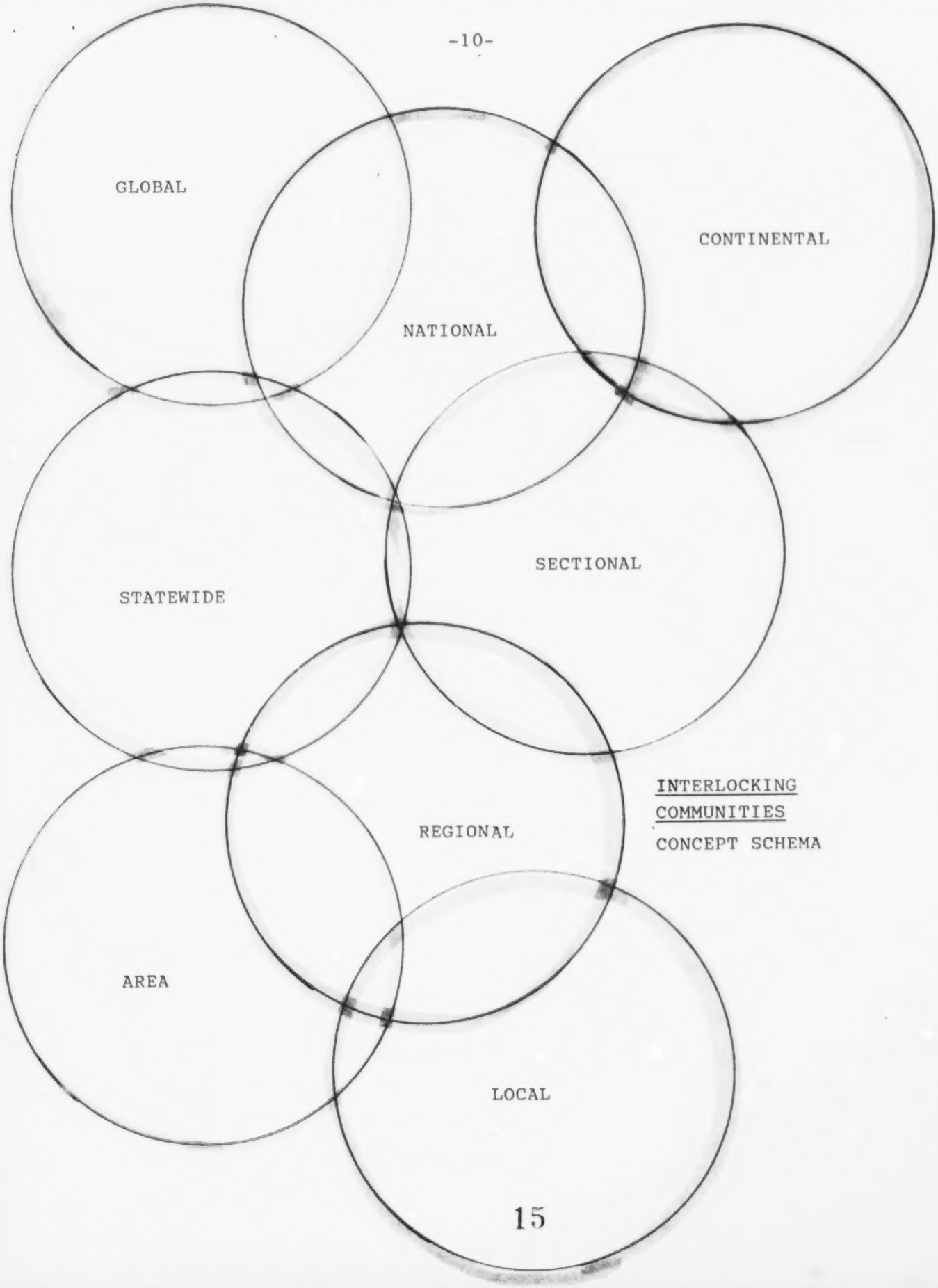
ARTIFACTS/RELICS

A study of art objects, tools/weapons, architecture, dress, and diet can tell much about human cultures and the relationship(s) between human beings and the natural lifespace environment within which they exist.

Clay pottery, straw baskets, woolen blankets, metal tools and weapons, shell jewelry, and wooden toys say something about available materials and resources, lifestyles, geographical location, terrain, geology, climate, and technological development. Primitive drawings, realistic and abstract paintings, and sculptures say something about a culture's concepts of beauty, grace, and style.

Art galleries, museums, artist's studios, music halls, theatres, art objects on public display in parks and elsewhere, and the architecture of buildings and structures become relevant in the daily lives and experiences of students. These objects not only personify the creative style and personality of individuals -- but also reflect the aesthetic values and quality-of-life of social groups -- forever frozen in time!

Students can be involved in making art objects -- as they portray (role play) members of diverse global cultures. These hands-on experiences will enhance student comprehension and provide a frame-of-reference for future culture-oriented studies/activities.



INTERLOCKING
COMMUNITIES
CONCEPT SCHEMA

FRAME-OF-REFERENCE

As students progress through the several grades, they are exposed to new concepts, knowledge, and skills related to social studies education -- within the several disciplines of knowledge (e.g., anthropology, economics, geography, and history).

Each student develops a personal frame-of-reference ... based upon experiences gained through formal/informal processes. As a result of accumulated experiences, students develop insights. These insights enable them to judge contemporary activities, events, and processes -- as compared to prior experiences. Without a wealth of experiences, upon which to establish a frame-of-references, students are unable to make value judgments.

Without having gained exposure to diverse natural/social environments -- whether closeby or distant -- students are unable to make judgments regarding global phenomena that exist within the context of the total lifespace environment that is EARTH!

Any-and-all community-centered programs must focus student's attention on the real life character of the immediate surroundings. Students must begin to understand those phenomena that make up the community in which they live.

WORLD OF WORK

An integral part of any awareness program is an understanding of the several roles played by community members, and how these several roles contribute to the improved quality of life for one-and-all. COMMUNITY HELPERS is a traditional theme of

community awareness or community education programs. Students must begin to understand the importance that formal education plays in diverse careers and occupations.

By relating formal instruction that takes place in the classroom to the community -- and to diverse careers and occupations -- students begin to understand that all three of these factors are related; that the welfare of the individual and the community are dependent upon quality education and knowledge/skills application in the real world -- dealing with real life conflicts, issues, problems, and/or situations!

INTERLOCKING COMMUNITIES

As displayed on page ten, in this discourse, the individual exists within the context of several (perceived and non-perceived) communities -- simultaneously. As the individual matures, gains a variety of experiences, increases his/her knowledge and understanding, and interacts with natural and social phenomena, he/she begins to realize that humans are citizens of several levels of community. Thus, the individual has a responsibility to participate in the affairs and activities of each community level. While we are citizens of the city or town in which we, now, live -- we are also citizens of the world! Students must begin to understand the responsibilities placed upon them by the several 'communities' in which they exist.

HOW TOs

Whenever it is deemed important, and necessary, to bring resources into the classroom or to take students into the community environment, it must be clearly understood by the teacher(s), the students, immediate supervisors, parents, resource people/sites, and fellow teachers that no other experience or type of exposure to phenomena (real or simulated) can be substituted in their place.

With approval from one's immediate supervisor(s) to conduct community-centered inquiry, the classroom teacher must:

1) contact the resource and inform the appropriate personnel of the day/time of the planned visit, the number of students and chaperones involved, and the instructional purpose(s) for either the classroom visit (by a guest speaker) or field-based visit students.

2) In the classroom, and prior to the guest speaker's arrival or student's excursion into the community, the teacher must formally introduce students to the resource that they will interact with. The teacher must make certain that ALL students know why it is important, for them, to interact with particular resources, and what they should expect to gain from the experience(s). If a field trip is planned to a specific location/site, the teacher

discuss the character/physical features of the location/site to be visited by students.

3) Obtain parental approval to take students on a daytrip or other type of excursion away from the school. Explain, in terms of learning enhancement, why it is important for their sons and daughters to be involved in the planned activity. Assure parents of the children's safety away from the school.

4) Prior to taking students into the community, design activities that will enhance their learning and comprehension. For example, THINGS to be on the lookout for en route to the resource and while at the location/site or place; take notes and document the experience using graphic media devices (e.g., motion picture cameras, still photography cameras, and video tape equipment); and/or collect samples/artifacts/relics for later study and discussion in the classroom or laboratory.

5) Plan for adequate student supervision -- using classroom aides, parent volunteers, and other teachers.

6) Upon arrival at community resources, and prior to departing the bus or van, divide the large group into small inquiry teams. Each team will be accompanied by a chaperone.

7) Upon completion of the planned activity -- call the roll and account for everyone; chaperones and students alike.

8) Back in the classroom, students should be involved in planned activities that build upon and incorporate resources experienced into later learning. Time should be set aside to discuss the experience(s). Some community-centered activities/phenomena lend themselves to follow-up visits, to the classroom, by resource people. Films or tapes made at the field-based sites can be screened in the classroom so that students can relive the earlier experience.

The classroom, and the school, exist not in isolation from the real world of students -- but should become the center of that known world. Experiences gained by students from Kindergarten through Grade Twelve should prepare them to successfully function within that world.

DEWEY AND EDUCATION

Writing in Experience and Education (1938), John Dewey proposed that school studies be derived from materials which exist within the scope of ordinary life-experiences of children and youth.

The incorporation of community resources into the K-12 curriculum provides opportunities to introduce students to lifespace phenomena that they might otherwise never experience.

LOOKING IN ON 21ST CENTURY SCHOOLS

The following comments and statements are gleaned from a copyrighted, unpublished work, by this author (1991) entitled P.I.E A Recipe for Teaching Success.

Imagine, for a moment, schools that meet the needs of EVERY student; that challenge their abilities; that nurture their interests; that enhance their exposure to the several WORLDS about them; that hold them accountable for their actions as well as decisions made; and that provide them with continuous opportunities to acquire, apply, reinforce, and refine critical academic/life/social skills within the context of fused learning environments -- as they proceed through a K-12 schema that is the continuous-integrated-sequential curriculum.

As students experience a multi-discipline (fused) core organized around essential (basic) concepts and themes, they will be able to:

1) interact with community resource people who have been incorporated into the curriculum as classroom

and field-based teachers of concepts, knowledge, and skills;

2) develop real life perspectives as a result of studying phenomena within the context of the community;

3) participate in summer studies that provide travel opportunities to diverse regions of the globe for purposes of effecting perspectives;

4) exhibit understandings of relationships between real life world phenomena (e.g., people, places things, and events) that are nearby/close-to-home and distant/far-removed from where students are located;

5) participate in real-to-life (simulation) activities;

6) design, in conjunction with teachers and instructional support specialists -- as well as community resource people -- learning activities (and related packets) that promote self instruction and enhance self-paced learning;

7) design, in conjunction with teachers and instructional support specialists -- as well as community resource people -- individual and group learning activities that can be applied to classroom/field-based environments;

8) design and utilize audiovisual presentations as a verbal/non-verbal communications format;

9) interact with classroom teachers and community-based resource people in a variety of cooperative experience activities (CEAs) that are rooted in the several learning environments;

10) synthesize formal education/real life experiences into a fabric (wholistic perspective) of self, environments, and daily lives.

ALPHABET SOUP

Students will become proficient at discovery/inquiry only to the degree that teachers meet individual needs, design alternative learning experiences, and guide student achievement of stated instructional goals -- whether classroom or field-based.

In order to provide students, in the social studies, with a diversity of direct and vicarious experiences upon which to develop perceptions and understandings of real life world or real-to-life world phenomena, teachers must design and blend learning activities that take place in the classroom/school and within the confines of the community environment.

DIRECTED LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS (DLEs) provide students opportunities to receive information and skills training from teachers. Children and youth are formally introduced to new ideas, information, and processes via lectures, demonstrations, audiovisual presentations, and guest speakers. An emphasis is placed on memorization and drill exercises.

ALTERNATIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS (ALEs) encompass teacher designed learning activities/experiences/situations from which students select those options that appeal to personal interests, best suit individual learning styles, help them to fulfill needs, or to achieve personal goals. Because not all students learn the same thing(s), in the same way(s), to the

same degree of comprehension, at the same time ... classroom teachers of the social studies must design varied activities, provide a spectrum of materials, and evaluate individual student progress. Once equipped with DLE-acquired concepts/knowledge/skills, students assume a greater responsibility for their learning in ALEs. In ALEs, students are challenged to apply that which has been learned in DLEs -- to new and diverse situations. KNOWING HOW TO PERFORM and KNOWING WHAT TO DO become the criteria for success and assessment.

SIMULATED EXPERIENCE ENVIRONMENTS (SEEs) provide students with opportunities to vicariously interact with natural and social phenomena that are distant/far-removed but which exist within the context of the global lifespace environment (See Page 10). Data is presented/acquired within the context of real-to-life (simulated) scenarios. Self-instruction strategies include role playing, interaction with computer simulations, viewing audiovisual presentations, and reading/discussing primary source materials such as diaries, documents, and letters.

PERCEPTION ENRICHMENT ENVIRONMENTS (PEEs) provide students with opportunities to apply - reinforce - refine acquired concepts, knowledge, and skills in the classroom and at field-based sites.

> Teachers function as cooperative learners, as resource personnel to student inquiry teams, and as evaluators of individual/group proficiency attainment. Students are involved in activities (classroom/field-based) that require them to think critically and make decisions as they brainstorm possible solutions to perceived problems.

CLOSING COMMENTS

Because children and youth live in a real world, their formal education experiences must better prepare them to live within that world!

Community-centered instruction provides a basis for knowledge/skills acquisition and application within the context of the real world environment in which students live; the real life world that each identifies with -- in some particular fashion.

Schools that remain aloof from the real world about them are doomed to failure! These schools are NOT meeting the real world needs of students -- but rather exist to serve the personal needs of a few selfish educrats.

It should not be assumed that teachers know the communities in which they live/teach. There is a need for massive inservice training efforts across America. Teachers must be knowledgable about their communities before students can be formally and intelligently introduced to their surroundings -- and before teachers can realize the educational potential of community resources.